

SPELLRUNNERS

It's the late 21st century, a few decades after magic returned to the world. A small percentage of the population transformed overnight, with many becoming elves, ogres, beastfolk, or other so-called "new humans"—but some gained arcane gifts, the most powerful of whom were the "archmages."

Civilization almost collapsed, but the archmages stepped forward to help, and with their support, the world's governments managed to restore order. The people soon adapted to a new way of life, while the archmages faded from the public eye to establish secret organizations and pursue their own agendas.

You are "spellrunners," freelance arcane operatives who take on clandestine jobs for the archmages.

CHARACTER CREATION

Each player creates a character as follows:

1. Choose a **trait**: Agile (*used for reflexes, dexterity, stealth, and ranged combat*), brawny (*covers strength, vitality, athletics, and melee combat*), or crafty (*covers smarts, charm, alertness, and mental/social combat*).

2. Pick a **concept**: Street samurai, hitman, hacker, thief, street racer, techie, or fixer.

3. Select a physical **perk**: Enhanced senses, close combat expert, superior strength, smooth talker, exceptional gymnast, lightning reflexes, or special gadget (arcane or cybernetic—describe it).

4. Gain a magical **perk**: Telepathy, chronomancy, divination, technomancy, illusionism, telekinesis, or elementalism (specify the element).

5. Pick a **quirk**: Arrogant, heroic, trigger-happy, loud, stubborn, brutal, or addicted (describe it).

6. Grab 3 **karma** tokens and 3 **resolve** tokens.

7. Make up a **name** and **moniker**, and introduce yourself to the crew (e.g., "I'm Joe "Chrome" Lis, an agile hitman with enhanced senses due to my elven form. I use *divination*, and I'm *trigger-happy*").

CYBERWARE, FORM, OR SKILL

Physical **perks** could come from cybernetics (e.g., enhanced senses thanks to an artificial eye), being a "new human" (e.g., superior strength as you're a huge ogre), or natural skill and talent (e.g., being a close combat expert after many years of intensive training)—but that's up to the player to decide.

RESOLVING CHALLENGES

If a player attempts something risky, they roll 1-3 six-sided dice and must equal or beat a difficulty of 4-6 on at least one die. Succeed on multiple dice for an exceptional success (narrate an additional benefit). Rolling "1" on all dice is a critical failure (introduce a complication to the scene).

The GM picks a **trait** and assigns a difficulty of 4-6 for each challenge (most should be difficulty 5). Combat challenges use effort tokens—remove 1 effort token for each die that succeeds.

Players usually roll 2 dice, but roll 3 dice if the challenge matches their **trait**. If a challenge falls completely outside the scope of their **concept** (e.g., a street racer cracking a safe), they lose 1 die.

KARMA AND RESOLVE

Each player has 3 **karma** and 3 **resolve**. Spend 1 **karma** after rolling to reduce the difficulty by 1, if you can justify how your **perk** helps you. Recover 1 **karma** if you increase the difficulty by 1 before rolling, narrating how your **quirk** hinders you.

If you use a **quirk** and succeed at the challenge, you may recover 1 **resolve** instead of 1 **karma**.

For dangerous actions (such as combat), failure costs 1 **resolve** (or 2 on a critical failure). If a PC runs out of **resolve**, they are eliminated from the scene—but death is primarily a narrative conceit, and the PC usually returns later at full **resolve**.



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SYSTEM

Tricube Tales

BACKGROUND

Figu Design

STORY SYMBOLS

Delapouite, Lorc,
DarkZaitzev, Skoll
Game-icons.net

ILLUSTRATIONS

Dean Spencer

CLANDESTINE MISSIONS

Roll on the following tables to generate the latest mission (see the next page for examples).

The spellrunners are hired to...

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| ■ Spy or obtain intel | ■ Rescue someone |
| ■ Steal something | ■ Commit sabotage |
| ■ Assassinate someone | ■ Provide assistance |

Somewhere in, on, or near a...

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| ■ Museum or gallery | ■ High-tech facility |
| ■ Government facility | ■ Residential building |
| ■ Hotel or office block | ■ Construction site |

While dealing with...

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| ■ A secret meeting | ■ A viral infection |
| ■ Rival spellrunners | ■ Law enforcement |
| ■ A well-connected foe | ■ A hit squad |

RUNNING THE GAME

The GM should describe the opening scene, react to the players' decisions, and assign the **traits** and difficulties for challenges. Offer players **karma** in return for complications based on their **quirks**!

For combat encounters, assign the challenge 2-3 effort tokens per player. The enemy is defeated when all their effort tokens have been removed.

The players should make all the rolls, narrate the outcome of their actions, and drive the story forward whenever possible. They can also spend 1 **karma** to influence the story or discover a clue through their **perk**, at the GM's discretion.

OBJECTIVES

Described here are examples of objectives for the mission generator (first table):

1. ARCANÉ ORIGIN

A top-secret government agency is investigating the so-called “Arcane Wave”—the return of magic to the world. The crew must steal the research.

2. SACRIFICIAL BLADE

Someone has smuggled a magical dagger into the country. They plan to sell it to a private collector, but the spellrunners are hired to steal it first.

3. BLACKMAIL FAIL

Some fool is trying to blackmail an *archmage*! The crew must identify and terminate the threat.

4. KIDNAPPED

A magically-gifted youngster has been kidnapped by a criminal gang, and the spellrunners are hired to find the protégé and return them to safety.

5. NO SAFE HAVEN

The characters are hired to locate and sabotage a technomancer’s personal VR rig—the smartchair and headset she uses to connect to “Haven.” This online VR world and de facto state is outside the jurisdiction of world governments. Haven is also considered neutral ground by the archmages.

6. SAFE TRAVELS

The spellrunners are hired to pick up a VIP from the airport and escort them to their destination.

LOCATIONS

Described here are examples of locations for the mission generator (second table):

1. ARCANÉ EXHIBIT

This history museum has a temporary exhibit of arcane items on loan from a private collection.

2. THE CAGE

The government facility, nicknamed “the cage,” is a detainment and research station for victims of magical infections, such as vampires, werewolves, and zombies—the “Arcane Wave” affected plants, animals, and even viruses, not *just* humans!

3. CELESTIAL HOTEL

This high-rise hotel is renowned for its expensive suites and state-of-the-art conference rooms. It is popular for private meetings and shady deals.

4. CHROME CAFE

This high-tech establishment sells light meals and drinks, but it also offers private rooms fitted with top-end VR rigs for connecting to Haven.

5. PRIVATE FORTRESS

More of a castle than a villa, this luxurious home has a high-tech security system, intricate magical wards, and guards patrolling the grounds.

6. GRAVE TIDINGS

Construction on a large building site stalled after workers discovered a mass grave while digging—an investigation is currently underway.

COMPLICATIONS

Described here are examples of complications for the mission generator (third table):

1. HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

A vital contact is unable or unwilling to meet the characters in meatspace; they’ll need to find a VR rig and meet their contact online—in Haven!

2. SPELLRUNNER SHOWDOWN

A rival gang of spellrunners is working at cross-purposes to the crew, and a violent confrontation between the two groups seems inevitable.

3. HIGH-STAKES JOB

A prominent NPC is secretly related to one of the archmages, and the stakes for this mission are far higher than the spellrunners realize.

4. UNWANTED ATTENTION

A viral outbreak has resulted in a small horde of zombies overrunning the area. The incident will be dealt with by the authorities, but it might draw unwanted attention to the spellrunners.

5. COLLATERAL DAMAGE

A Special Weapons and Magic (SWAM) team has been deployed to eliminate a supernatural threat, and collateral damage could be significant.

6. CONTRACT KILLERS

A team of assassins is hunting the spellrunners or someone they know, and the killers will probably show up at the worst possible moment!

ADDING A TWIST TO THE STORY

For further inspiration, roll two dice on the table below and use the symbol as an improvisational prompt (you don’t need to interpret it literally). For example, ■■ might indicate an observation or clue, a camera, a high-tech facility, or a cybernetic implant, while rolling ■■ could refer to research or an investigation, a library, secret information, or a database, and ■■ might represent a VR rig, a hacker, an online contact, a technomancer, or an agent of Haven.



SPELLRUNNERS: HAVEN HEIST

The spellrunners are hired to break into a “Haven Hosting” facility and steal a magical figurine from the premises. There are dozens of these locations scattered around the world, each built upon areas of natural magic to strengthen their enchantments and wards. Ostensibly, the facilities are designed to host and protect Haven’s computer servers—but top tier customers are also offered a safe deposit box service called the “Vault.”

This adventure is split into a series of scenes, each of which defines one or more challenges for the players to overcome. Read and resolve each scene before proceeding to the next, with the players making choices and narrating their characters’ actions as usual. The reader is encouraged to expand and embellish the adventure, add details and flavor as the story unfolds, and provide the players with opportunities to interact with each other and roleplay their characters.

Due to the various challenges in this adventure, players should make careful use of their **perks** and **quirks**. Should a character run out of **resolve**, consider giving them an “affliction” appropriate to whatever defeated them. An affliction works just like a **quirk**, except the GM decides if and when to apply it.

APPROACHING HAVEN

The crew can approach the facility in a variety of ways. Described below are a few possible options, but players can also propose their own. If they’d rather fight, skip ahead to **Fighting the Guards**.

STEALTH

The spellrunners exit their vehicle and approach the checkpoint on foot, sneaking past the guards. Everyone must make a standard agile challenge.

BRUTE FORCE

The driver hits the accelerator, smashing through the checkpoint. Everyone has to make a standard brawny challenge as they’re tossed around in the vehicle, ducking gunfire from the guards.

DECEPTION

The characters attempt to bluff their way past the guards, using disguises or fake ID badges. One of the players must make a hard crafty challenge to do the talking, while the other players only need to make easy crafty challenges to look the part.

MAGIC

Players can always describe using their magic to help overcome challenges, but this doesn’t change the **trait**—it’s just a narrative device. However, it *does* let them justify spending **karma** on the **perk** to lower the difficulty, if they need to!



FIGHTING THE GUARDS

If anyone failed a challenge in the previous scene, the group must fight the guards! Combat has two effort tokens per PC, it uses standard challenges, and each player selects a **trait**—agile for firearms, brawny for melee, or crafty for magical combat.

ENTERING THE FACILITY

To get inside the facility, the crew needs to find a way to open or bypass the door. Described below are a few possible solutions.

PRECISION

The characters could pry open the security panel, and one of them could carefully disable the lock. One player must make a hard agile challenge: on a failure, the lock jams; they’ll have to use force.

FORCE

A character can always try to *force* the door open. Treat this as a hard brawny challenge: on a failure it takes a while, and there’s an ambush waiting on the other side (treat like **Fighting the Guards**).

HACKING

One of the crew could jack into the maintenance port on the security panel, and try to override the system. This involves a hard crafty challenge: on a failure, the system locks up; time to use force!

SEARCHING THE FACILITY

Once the spellrunners are inside the facility, they will need to search for the Vault, dealing with any security systems or magical traps along the way.

Roll to see what the crew encounters, then roll again! Keep doing this until you roll an encounter the crew has *already* faced—instead of running it a second time, proceed to **Entering the Vault**.

If an encounter lists two **traits**, each player can pick separately. Failing a roll costs one **resolve**.

■ LASER TRAP

As the crew makes its way down a corridor, laser beams shoot from the walls at different heights. Each player must roll a standard crafty challenge to spot the trap in time to evade it, or a standard agile challenge to dive between the laser beams.

■ MAGICAL WARDS

Glowing runes flare up on the walls, pulsing with green energy. Everyone needs to make a standard crafty challenge to resist the agonizing magic.

■ AUTOMATED GUN TURRET

A turret slides down from the ceiling and opens fire on the crew! Each player must roll a standard agile challenge to take cover and shoot back.

■ KILLER ROBOTS

A squad of heavily armed robots patrols this area. The characters can sneak past as a standard agile challenge, or sprint past with a standard brawny challenge. If they *fight*, it'll be a hard challenge.

■ POISONOUS GAS

The corridor starts filling up with poisonous gas! Everyone makes a standard brawny challenge as they hold their breath and stagger to safety.

■ AMBUSHED BY GUARDS

Ambush! There's no room for guns in this vicious fight with the guards. Everyone makes a standard brawny or crafty challenge (for melee or magic).

ENTERING THE VAULT

Eventually, the crew reaches the Vault and heads inside. The players can simply roleplay how they cut open the armored door, using either magic or high-tech tools—but there's also a guardian!

Roll a die to see which guardian the crew needs to face. Failing any **trait** roll during these combat challenges costs the character one **resolve**.

■/■ DRONE SWARM

As the crew enters the Vault, a swarm of deadly drones rises up into the air with a low humming sound, their targeting systems activating as their micro-lasers take aim at the spellrunners!

The swarm has two effort tokens per PC, and it moves *fast*—fighting the drones in melee or with magic requires a hard brawny or crafty challenge. However, if someone takes cover, they can shoot at the drones as a standard agile challenge.

■/■ CYBORG SENTRY

An ogre cyborg stands guard in front of the Vault, her massive body encased in steel, and her neon eyes analyzing the crew. Twin gauss cannons are mounted on her shoulders, but she prefers to get up close and personal with her metal fists!

The ogre has two effort tokens per PC. Ranged or melee combat counts as a hard agile or brawny challenge, but the cyborg's brain is still organic—magical combat is a standard crafty challenge.

■/■ TECHNOMANCER

A plainly-dressed guy glances up from a terminal outside the Vault. He looks like an IT technician, but when motes of magical energy start gathering in the air around him, the spellrunners suddenly realize they're facing a technomancer!

This deadly mage has two effort tokens per PC. He is a powerful spellcaster and his wards deflect gunfire, so ranged or magical combat is resolved as a hard agile or crafty challenge. Melee combat is a far more effective way to fight him, and this can be resolved as a standard brawny challenge.

ESCAPE INTO THE NIGHT

After the spellrunners steal the magical figurine, they must leave the facility before reinforcements arrive! Described below are a few different routes the crew might take, but players can also propose an alternative solution. Failing the challenge costs the character one **resolve**.

SERVICE DOOR

The spellrunners sneak out of a service door and flee into the night. Each player will need to make a standard agile challenge to avoid snipers.

FRONT ENTRANCE

Dropping all pretence of subtlety, the crew kicks open the front door and charges outside, brutally steamrolling any guards foolish enough to stand in their way! Everyone must make a hard brawny challenge, as they fight their way to freedom.

SECRET TUNNEL

The crew decides to utilize a secret escape tunnel they discovered earlier, but this route has dangers of its own. Each player needs to make a standard crafty challenge to crawl down the narrow tunnel and bypass its automated defenses.

CONCLUDING THE JOB

Once they've escaped the facility, the crew should arrange to meet up with their contact, hand over the figurine, and collect payment. But sometimes a job doesn't quite go according to plan!

If you'd like to extend the scenario, roll once or twice on the following table for inspiration—and roll on the twist table too, to add some flavor.

The spellrunners discover that...

- The stolen figurine belonged to an archmage!
- A kill team is hunting them or their contact.
- The job was a test—now for the *real* mission.
- Their contact has been murdered or abducted!
- The job was a setup, and there is no payment.
- The crew were tricked—the figurine is a fake!